



REBECCA BAUER-KAHAN
Assemblymember, District 16

AB 1356 – Protecting Reproductive Health Clinic Patients

Summary

AB 1356 will protect patients and providers at reproductive health centers by updating the California Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE Act) and modernizing online privacy laws.

Background and Problem

Individuals who oppose the right to an abortion have for years targeted vulnerable patients and providers at Planned Parenthood health centers and abortion clinics across the country.

The rise in far right extremist violence has correlated, and often been preceded by protests by anti-abortion groups. According to the National Abortion Federation, anti-choice activists have dramatically increased their hostility and targeted activity against abortion clinics since 2017. These groups are often directly aligned with other right-wing and conservative movements.

What began as peaceful protests in the 1970s have escalated to blockading health center entrances, arsons, and bombings, stalking and kidnapping doctors and their families, and even murdering health care workers. Anti-abortion extremists have been linked to 11 murders, 26 attempted murders, 42 bombings, 185 arsons, and thousands of other incidents directed at abortion providers.

Even when anti-choice protesters do not threaten death and harm, acts of vandalism can cost tens of thousands of dollars to clinics. It is extremely common for protesters to assemble outside health centers, like Planned Parenthood, and while some protests are peaceful, they can quickly become violent and emotionally scarring. The effects can

also cause delays in care. At just one health center this year, the presence of a protester has caused a 50% drop-off in patients arriving for their appointment.

Protestors have also started using the internet to target providers, patients, and volunteers. There are a variety of websites that list abortion provider information, including where they practice, their photo, and other personal information. Anti-choice extremists also commonly take photos of providers and patients, and post them online, calling them out by name and location. These practices are not only intimidating but also pose serious personal risk.

Anti-choice extremists threaten the livelihoods and lives of patients, providers, and health center staff. Demonstrations and threats of violence can cause psychological distress while spreading misinformation.

While these offenses can be criminal, it can be difficult for local law enforcement to enforce the laws and take action against offenders. Furthermore, law enforcement is often reluctant to respond and protect clinics.

What this bill does

AB 1356 will increase penalties in the CA FACE Act to ensure offenders are held accountable for the fear and harassment they inflict.

This bill will also expand the definition of visual harassment to keep reproductive healthcare workers safe from online harassment.

Violence and harassment at abortion providers have increased with the rise of far right extremism and the internet. AB 1356 increases legal protections for providers and patients commensurate with the risks



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they face. It pre-empts escalations in extremist violence, and protects the rights of vulnerable individuals seeking basic, necessary healthcare.

Sponsor

Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
(Sponsor)

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